

‘King of Battle’ keeps Shkin defended

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Keith Thompson
4th Public Affairs Detachment

SHKIN FIREBASE, Afghanistan – When the infantrymen here go out on patrol they go into battle knowing that the “King of Battle” is watching over them.

The men of Battery C, 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Regiment have the key job of providing indirect fire support for the 1st Bn., 87th Infantry Regt. and other coalition forces of this remote firebase, according to Sgt. Auston Conner, Btry. C, 3rd Bn., 6th FA Regt. fire direction noncommissioned officer.

“We support them for close contingency



Soldiers from Btry. C, 3rd Bn., 6th FA Regt. break down an M119 Howitzer for maintenance at Shkin Firebase.

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USO all-stars entertain troops at Bagram

Story and photos by Sgt. Greg Heath
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers and some all-star guests visited Bagram yesterday as part of the United Service Organizations’ sponsored Christmas tour.

Myers brought along actor and comedic legend Robin Williams, Olympic gold medalist and World Wrestling Entertainment superstar Kurt Angle, and NASCAR racer Mike Wallace to Afghanistan to thank all military members for doing their part in the War on Terrorism.

The guests performed two shows before an excited, standing-room-only crowd at Bagram Civic Center and then afterwards signed autographs and took pictures with service members.

Myers opened the shows for the celebrities by saying a few words to the thousands of troops gathered at the center.

“The only reason we’re here is to say we appreciate what you do,” Myers said. “It’s because of you Afghans have a chance of having a normal country and normal life.”

Kurt Angle, who won a gold medal in the 1996 Olympic Games in

wrestling, was next to take the stage and give his message to the troops.

“Being an American, I took very much pride in that I represented my country in the Olympic games where I proudly won a gold medal for greatest country in the world,” Angle said. “And the reason it’s the greatest country in the world is because of people like you, who defend our country for what we believe in.”

Angle thanked service members for their sacrifice and then hit them with one more rousing message.

“We’re the kind of country that doesn’t back down from anybody, and we’re certainly the kind of country that never loses,” Angle said, after which the crowd erupted into cheers.

When NASCAR driver Mike Wallace took the stage, he got the crowd going by shouting a loud “Go Army!” During the NASCAR season, Wallace said he was honored to drive the Army sponsored racecar for eight races.

He also passed his message of support to the troops, “Everyone remembers, everyone thinks about you and I’ll tell you what, we all support you.”

Last, but certainly not least to take the stage was comic legend Robin Williams.

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



The conviction makes Lee Boyd Malvo eligible for the death penalty.

Jury convicts Malvo of murder

CHESAPEAKE, Va.—Lee Boyd Malvo was found guilty Thursday of killing a woman during last fall's sniper shootings that terrorized Washington, D.C., and outlying areas of Virginia and Maryland.

Malvo, who was 17 at the time of the shootings, could face the death penalty. He had pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity.

The jury deliberated about 13 hours over two days before finding Malvo guilty of terrorism and capital murder in the Oct. 14, 2002, killing of FBI analyst Linda Franklin outside a Home Depot in Falls Church, Va. Malvo also was found guilty on one count of using a firearm in commission of a felony.

Franklin was one of 10 people killed in the sniper attacks. Three others were wounded.

The same jury of eight women and four men will begin hearing testimony Friday to decide whether to recommend the death penalty or life in prison without parole.

Mali rescues more than a 100 children from traffickers

BAMAKO, Mali—Malian authorities have rescued more than 100 children and teenagers from suspected traffickers believed to be taking them into forced labor in rice fields, officials in the West African nation said Tuesday.

Police stopped 112 minors aged between 10 and 18 as they traveled in buses over the week-end in the Segou region, northeast of the capital Bamako. They arrested two suspected traffickers.

Mohamed Attayer Maiga, national director for children at Mali's ministry for women and children, told *Reuters* most of the children were from impoverished neighbor Burkina Faso, and

had been sent back to their homes after police checked their papers.

"As far as we are concerned, they are victims of trafficking because they are forced to come, forced to work and someone else takes the money," he said.

He said such children were normally taken to work in rice fields, often by traffickers working in complicity with tribal elders.



Sharon says Israel will implement a disengagement plan if Palestinians do not take steps to fight terrorism.

Sharon warns Palestinians

HERZLIYA, Israel—Israel will begin to separate itself from the Palestinians if the Palestinian side does not meet its responsibilities under the road map for Middle East peace within several months, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Thursday.

This "disengagement procedure," to be pursued "in maximum coordination with the United States," would include moving some Israeli settlements, drawing new security lines and altering the deployment of Israeli forces, Sharon said at a security conference in Herzliya, Israel. It would not create a final border, he said.

The road map—backed by the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia—calls for a sequence of security, economic and political steps leading to an independent Palestine by 2005.

If Israel were to disengage, Palestinians would get substantially less than what they could negotiate through the road-map procedure, Sharon said.

The unilateral "disengagement" would be aimed at reducing terrorism and increasing security for Israelis while creating "minimum friction" with Palestinians.



Putin was a strong opponent of the war in Iraq.

Putin 'ready' for Iraq debt talks

MOSCOW, Russia—President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that Russia is willing to start negotiations on forgiving Iraq's \$8 billion in debt to Moscow, its largest creditor.

After meeting President Bush's special envoy on Iraq, former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, Putin said he was ready to discuss the issue in the framework of the Paris Club, an informal group of official creditors that coordinates debt repayment.

Russia "expressed its readiness to in the near future start negotiations on settling the debt within the framework of the Paris Club with the goal of relieving Iraq's debt burden," according to a Kremlin statement.

Michael Jackson charged

SANTA BARBARA, Calif.—The stage for a contentious legal battle was set before the world's media spotlight when California prosecutors formally filed molestation charges against pop star Michael Jackson in a case involving a cancer-stricken boy invited to the singer's Neverland Ranch.

Jackson was charged with nine counts—seven of child molestation and two of administering an intoxicating agent for the purpose of a committing a felony. The charges involve incidents alleged to have occurred in February and March of this year, District Attorney Tom Sneddon announced Thursday.

In addition, the complaint includes special allegations that could make Jackson ineligible for probation in the case, Sneddon said.

In a prepared statement read to the public, Sneddon said the alleged victim would take the stand at a trial. "The family is committed to this process," he said.

4th Infantry Div. follows up big catch with Samarra op.

Story by Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

KIRKUK, Iraq – The Army's 4th Infantry Division is continuing its aggressive fight against enemy cells with a raid in Samarra that picked up 73 men and a significant amount of material useful in making improvised explosive devices.

Army Maj. Gen. Raymond Ordierno, the division commander, said the operation against the Samarra cell continues. He said the operation acknowledges that despite the division's capture of Saddam Hussein Dec. 13, a lot of work remains in Iraq.

"We think it was a complete cell we caught at a meeting," Ordierno said during an interview in Kirkuk. He was in the northern Iraqi city to meet with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers.

Ordierno said 4th Infantry Division soldiers had picked up nine other individuals from different cells operating in the area. "Whenever we have more success, we get more intel and more fidelity," the general said to reporters traveling with Myers. "We also have more people coming forward and giving us more info. That's always helpful."

The general said the division has had a number of problems in Samarra, and the city council asked the division for its help. Ordierno credits the young commanders and sergeants in his units for the successes. "We've been here nine months now," he said. "Every single day they go out there, they are at some risk. You never get a day off. Every day there is a potential that you will come into conflict. The mental toughness that our soldiers have shown has been absolutely unbelievable. The leaders that we are developing out of these young Americans is incredible. We don't say enough about that."

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

"R XMAS"

1530Z at the MWR Building:

It's a few days before Christmas, and a Latin American couple living in New York City are preparing and packaging their heroin for street distribution...



Tomorrow's event: "Salsa Night"

Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Saturday
<u>Uzbekistan:</u>	Clear H: 48F L: 27F	Partly cloudy H: 45F L: 26F
<u>Bagram:</u>	Haze H: 57F L: 36F	Haze H: 63F L: 36F
<u>Kabul:</u>	Haze H: 45F L: 23F	Haze/Snow H: 43F L: 21F
<u>Kandahar:</u>	Fog/Snow H: 33F L: 19F	Fog H: 35F L: 19F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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situations,” he said.

“We have kind of a defensive role out here,” said Spc. Joe Parnell, a Btry. C ammunition team chief. “Anytime we get a call for fire, we’re all over it.”

Parnell said that one of the best things about Shkin is firing their M119 105mm Howitzers – something they get to do often whether it’s simply firing illumination rounds or putting steel on target against Anti Coalition Militants.

“It’s not all training. We get to do good stuff,” he said. “You forget about all the boot shining and other stuff and just do your mission.”

Although he said he loves firing the gun, Parnell said that sometimes he tires of constantly being at the ready.

“Sometimes I’m tired of looking at the Howitzer,” he said. “I’m always around it – it’s always there.”

It’s that continual vigilance that makes Shkin a unique place to serve.

“We’re at the forefront of everybody,” Conner said. “This is the place that most people don’t want to come.”

“Anything can happen,” said Spc. Willie Young, a fire direction computer operator. “(Shkin) has a reputation for mortar and rocket attacks. It’s got a reputation for being contact prone.”

“Shkin is kind of edgy,” Parnell said. “It’s got a kind of dangerous feel.

“Being here makes you think twice about stuff,” he said. “But it’s not that crazy – there are a lot of myths.”

Although serving at Shkin can be a trying experience, the “Red Legs” here said their experiences here have been rewarding.

“(Being here) makes you appreciate home,” said Young. “There’s a lot of clean fresh air and you get a lot of time to yourself to think



Spc. Joe Parnell checks the position of one of the M119 Howitzers used to defend Shkin Firebase along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

about things.”

“I definitely won’t forget the rockets,” said Conner. “I’ll have a lot of stories to tell my kids.”

Although Shkin does get a lot of rocket attacks, the Soldiers of the 3rd Bn., 6th FA Regt. ensure that the enemy gets a quick reply – directly from the “King.”

STARS, from Page 1

“GOOD MORNING BAGRAM,” bellowed Williams to the excitable crowd, playing on his famous line from the movie “Good Morning Vietnam.” Williams, who visited Afghanistan last year during this time, kept the crowd rolling with his energetic, off-the-cuff and often colorful comedic offerings.

Many of the troops at the show agreed that the USO show couldn’t have come at a better time.

“This was great, especially around this time when people are all bummed out,” said Sgt. Matthew Cusson, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment. “It was a great morale booster to have right before Christmas.”

For Marine Lance Cpl. Nicholas Ashley, 2nd Bn., 8th Marines, laughter was a welcome break from daily Bagram life.

“Robin Williams was hilarious,” said Ashley. “(The show’s) good for the troops; there’s no better way to think about home than to have some funny dude crack jokes on you.”



Robin Williams gets the audience going when he yells out “good morning Bagram” during a USO show at Bagram Air Base Thursday.



Service members grab for t-shirts and other gifts during the show.



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *SI.com*)

Rangers still hope to work out deal

NEW YORK – The Alex Rodriguez trade is “dead,” or so the Boston Red Sox say. The Texas Rangers still have hope.

Just hours after commissioner Bud Selig ended talks to restructure the shortstop’s \$252 million contract Thursday, the Red Sox said Manny Ramirez would not be sent to Texas for the AL MVP.

The Rangers, though, believed they could rekindle the swap of the two highest-paid players in baseball.

“There is a likelihood the deal is dead,” Texas general manager John Hart said. “But at the same time, we haven’t issued a statement that it’s completely dead.”

Rangers owner Tom Hicks would probably talk to the Red Sox to try to work out an agreement after all, Hart said. Boston and Rodriguez had tried to rework the deal so it would be acceptable to the players’ union, which rejected the changes Wednesday.

Selig had set a 5 p.m. deadline for an agreement. It passed without a deal, and the commissioner ended the talks.



Alex Rodriguez said he would go to Boston only with an agreement that met the union’s approval.

Kobe’s first hearing will shape defense

EAGLE, Colo. – Medical records and patient confidentiality will be at the heart of the Kobe Bryant hearing Friday, when evidence in

the rape case will be discussed in detail for the first time.

The NBA star’s lawyers will argue they should be allowed to introduce the records of the woman who accused him. They also will try to show mental problems might have affected her perception of what happened in a hotel room with Bryant last June.

The defense witness list is sealed, but prosecutors have confirmed the woman’s mother was subpoenaed to appear. At least one friend also has been subpoenaed.

An attorney for the woman has asked the judge to close the courtroom for any testimony regarding her medical history. State District Judge Terry Ruckriegle has not ruled on the request.

Bryant, a 25-year-old guard for the Los Angeles Lakers, faces four years to life in prison or 20 years to life on probation if convicted of felony sexual assault. Bryant, who has said the sex was consensual, will be at the hearing. The Lakers play at home Friday night.

Analysts said the defense needs to do everything it can to undermine the woman’s credibility at trial.

McNair leads four Titans to Pro Bowl

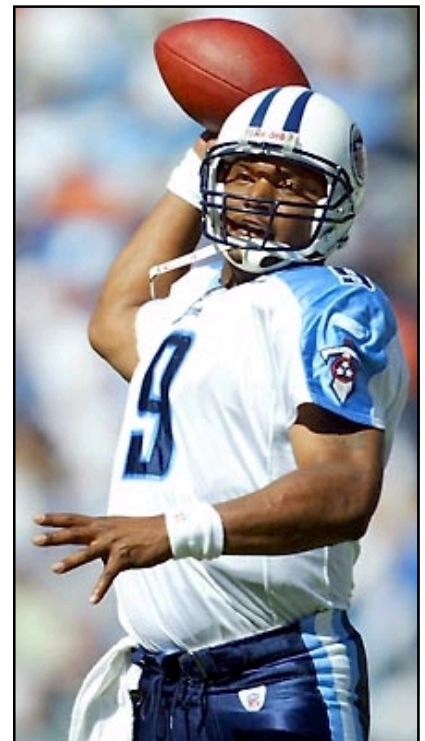
NEW YORK – Steve McNair made the Pro Bowl on Thursday along with three other Tennessee Titans, a year after the team was shunned with no selections, but still made the AFC title game.

It was the first time in his nine-year career that McNair made the NFL’s all-star game. It will be played Feb. 8 in Honolulu.

Kansas City and Baltimore each had eight players on the team, chosen by fans, coaches and players. The vote of each group counted one-third.

The Baltimore contingent was led by linebacker Ray Lewis and offensive tackle Jonathan Ogden, both multiple Pro Bowl selections. The Chiefs chosen included running back Priest Holmes and tight end Tony Gonzalez.

In addition to McNair, the Titans also had linebacker Keith Bulluck, wide receiver Derrick Mason and punter Craig Hentrich.



Steve McNair has an NFL-best QB rating of 102.5.

Sports on local Armed Forces Network TV

Saturday’s schedule (AFN Sports)

- ❖ NBA Pregame Shootaround (live) 0030Z, 0500L
- ❖ NBA: Pistons vs Pacers (live) 0100Z, 0530L
- ❖ NBA: Spurs vs Supersonics (live) 0330Z, 0800L
- ❖ COLL FB: Colgate vs Delaware (taped) 0800Z, 1230L
- ❖ NHL: Avalanche vs Mighty Ducks (taped) 1200Z, 1630L
- ❖ Sunday LFL Countdown (live) 1630Z, 2100L
- ❖ FOX NFL Sunday (live) 1800Z, 2230L
- ❖ NFL: Falcons vs Buccaneers (live) 1830Z, 2300L

Sunday’s schedule (AFN Sports)

- ❖ COLL BB: Wake Forest vs N.C. (live) 2130Z, 0200L
- ❖ COLL BB: Michigan State vs UCLA (live) 2330Z, 0400L
- ❖ Golf: Wendy’s Three Tour Challenge (taped) 0200Z, 0630L
- ❖ COLL FB: St. John’s vs Mount Union (taped) 0400Z, 0830L
- ❖ COLL BB: Alabama vs Oregon (taped) 0800Z, 1230L
- ❖ NHL: Stars vs Lightning (taped) 1100Z, 1530L
- ❖ Sunday NFL Count Down (live) 1600Z, 2030L
- ❖ NFL: Dolphins vs Buffalo Bills (live) 1800Z, 2230L

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

UN: 'We may lose Afghanistan'

UNITED NATIONS (*Reuters*) – World governments must send more peacekeeping troops to Afghanistan or risk seeing the central Asian nation crumble into chaos, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned on Thursday.

If the security situation does not improve, “we may lose Afghanistan,” he told a news conference.

Annan had been asked whether he agreed with his special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, who said recently the United Nations might leave Afghanistan if security could not be ensured.

“I think it was legitimate that he sounded the alarm, and I urge member states to pay attention to it and help us in improving security in Afghanistan so that we can get on with our work,” Annan said.

Brahimi, an architect of Afghanistan’s 2001 peace plan who is leaving his post at the end of the month, has also suggested that Afghanistan’s first elections, scheduled for June 2004, should be postponed until a reasonable level of security could be established.

But Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said the June timetable could be kept.

Annan said security was crucial both for successful elections and for Afghan reconstruction after the 2001 U.S.-led invasion that toppled the country’s Taliban rulers.

Washington went to war to punish the hard-line group for sheltering the al Qaeda network blamed for deadly Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

But Taliban fighters have re-emerged as a potent force in recent months, particularly in the south, targeting aid workers and supporters of Afghanistan’s new government.

A multinational force that initially provided security only in the capital, Kabul, was recently authorized by the United Nations to extend its reach across the country in an effort to crack down on feuding warlords as well as the Taliban.

But governments have not come up with the troops needed to do the job despite repeated U.N. appeals, Annan said.

Brahimi has called for 5,000 more peacekeeping troops, a near doubling of the 5,700-strong International Security Assistance Force now stationed mainly in Kabul.

Delegate denounces Afghan warlords

By Paul Watson

KABUL, Afghanistan (*LA Times*) – A female delegate was temporarily tossed out of Afghanistan’s constitutional convention yesterday when she stood up and declared that the country’s warlords, some of them participants in the historic meeting, are criminals.

The loya jirga, or traditional grand assembly that is debating a draft constitution, erupted into shouting and shoving when Malalai Joya, a delegate from the isolated western province of Farah, complained that militia leaders who participated in the nation’s brutal civil war of the

early 1990s now dominate committees debating the constitution.

“They were the ones who destroyed our country,” Joya shouted from the floor as hecklers denounced her. “They should be tried in international and national courts. If our poor people forgive these criminals, history will never forgive them, their criminal activities have all been recorded in history.”

Joya’s microphone was cut off and chaos ensued when dozens of men rushed toward the chairman’s platform.

“Down to Communism! Death to Communism!” one delegate belted as the chair called for order. “Kick the Communists out of the tent, out of the jirga.”

“What’s happening? Sit down!” assembly chairman Sibghatullah Mojaddidi appealed.

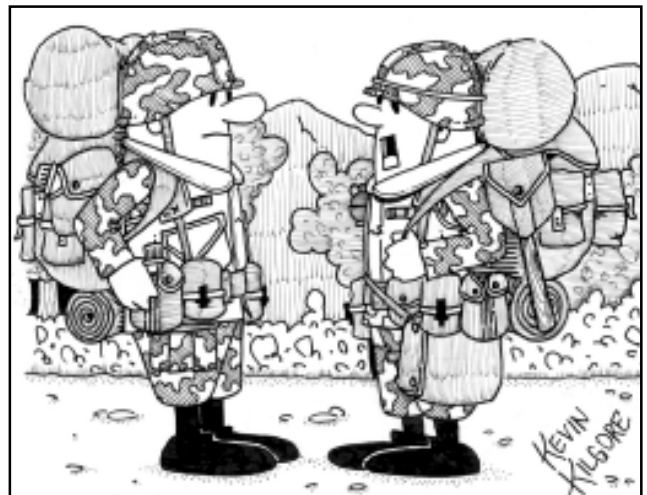
Mojaddidi, who was briefly Afghan president on the eve of the country’s civil war in 1992, called for someone in charge of security to intervene, and at least one guard escorted Joya from the assembly.

During a news conference later, Mojaddidi said Joya was removed for her own safety and because she had been impolite during the debate.

“In order to make her secure, I told her to get out of the tent,” he said. “As you know, our mujahedeen (holy warriors) are a different kind of people. Once they become upset, it’s very difficult to control them.”

The furor over Joya’s brief speech and the hostile reaction dominated questions from Afghan reporters, and one suggested the loya jirga was actually a loya jagla, or grand fight.

“If this is the light infantry, I’d hate to see what the heavy infantry is like.”



vein_kilgore@hotmail.com

By Kevin Kilgore

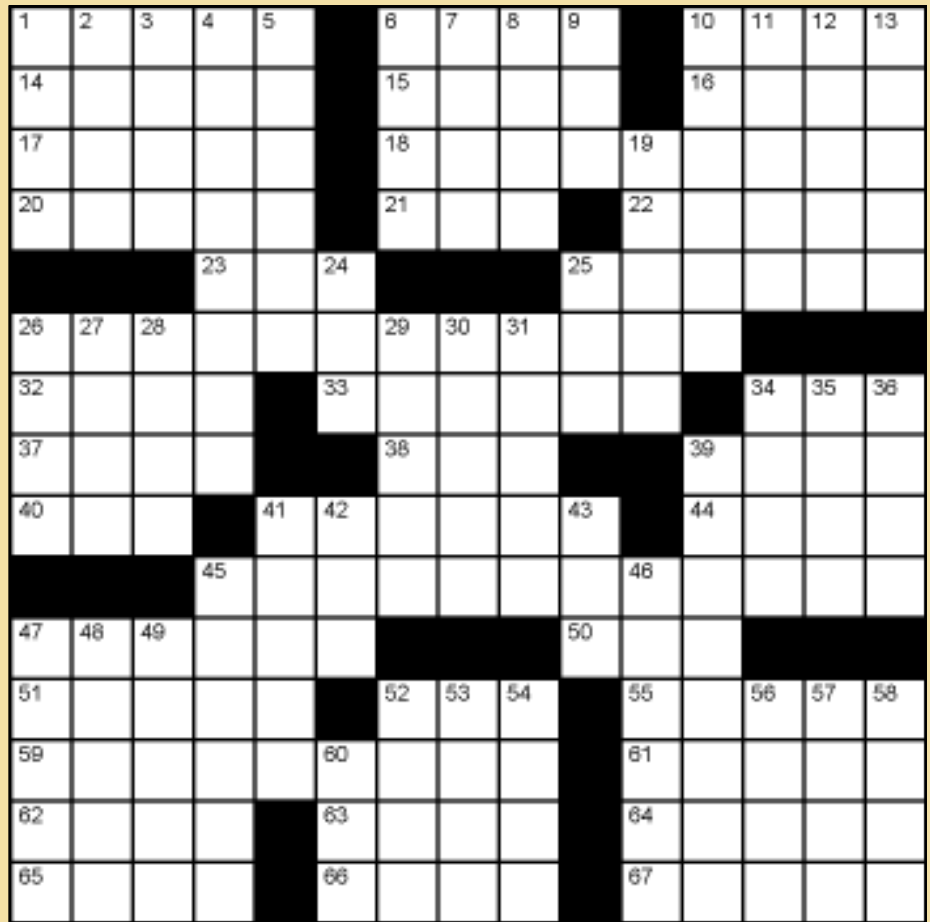
Laugh Support

Slippery crossword

(Courtesy of QUIZLAND.com)

ACROSS

- 1 Marked for removal
- 6 Grabbed the tab
- 10 Morsels in fried rice
- 14 Rudimentary seed
- 15 Not fooled by
- 16 ___ arms (angry)
- 17 Show as similar
- 18 Musical shootout site?
- 20 Send to Washington
- 21 Sidelines yell
- 22 Country's Haggard
- 23 Beer source
- 25 Have a ___ interest
- 26 Musical literary detective?
- 32 ___ sapiens
- 33 Geneticist's study
- 34 Tie the knot
- 37 "The Virginian" author Wister
- 38 Slower, in mus.
- 39 Stir up
- 40 Check endorser's need
- 41 Like the Six Million Dollar Man
- 44 "If all ___ fails ..."
- 45 Musical voting method?
- 47 Strut showily
- 50 ___-mo
- 51 At full speed, on the briny
- 52 Margery of nursery rhyme
- 55 Shell games
- 59 Musical city and its surroundings?
- 61 Ankle bones
- 62 "Put a lid ___!"
- 63 Tailless cat
- 64 Playful swimmer
- 65 Fruity drinks
- 66 ___-bitty
- 67 Has to have



DOWN

- 1 Loser to Clinton in '96
- 2 Devil's work
- 3 Skywalker of sci-fi
- 4 Nucleus orbiter
- 5 Kind of plate or implant
- 6 Flat busted
- 7 "Puppy Love" singer Paul
- 8 Scratch inducer
- 9 Cry from Homer Simpson
- 10 Least tainted
- 11 Dizzying designs
- 12 Lunar valley
- 13 Knock-___
- 19 Signs to heed
- 24 Orchestra's place
- 25 Vintner's vessel
- 26 Right away, when doubled
- 27 Hockey great Gordie
- 28 Prayer closer
- 29 Fielding average lowerer
- 30 Queeg's ship
- 31 Jazzman's "go!"
- 34 Humorist Rogers
- 35 "Born Free" lioness
- 36 Scout's doing
- 39 Move with one's job
- 41 Form of bingo
- 42 Hazardous for driving
- 43 "60 Minutes" network
- 45 Tees, e.g.
- 46 Longtime Dodgers skipper Walter
- 47 Mead research site
- 48 Make changes to
- 49 Abstract composer Erik
- 52 "Shucks!"
- 53 "... and that ___ hay!"
- 54 Like artificial fruit
- 56 Johnson of "Laugh-In"
- 57 Teacher's deg.
- 58 Lancelot and others
- 60 "___ seeing things?"

Solutions will be posted in Saturday's Freedom Watch